

What is a Ham Radio Operator?

If asked of the ordinary man on the street, the answer is likely to be "One of those guys with big antennas and who fiddles around with radios and that Morse code stuff." Note that this likely answer will more likely than not, include words similar to Morse code.

Ham operators are well rounded individuals when it comes to the "hobby" of ham radio. If they were people simply interested in talking to other people on a radio, then they might be one of the thousands of illegal operators that frequent the spectrum, without fear of any punishment, between the citizen's band and the 10 meter ham band (the so-called "freebanders"). These people have no interest in obeying any law(s) relating to operation of shortwave transmitters, nor do they have any interest in any service towards the community.

If not interested in operating a radio as a "freebander" through fear of repercussions (unlikely), perhaps a person who only wanted to talk to other people might be a cb operator, another group of individuals who routinely flout all rules and regulations with basically no fear of repercussions.

However, these two types of "operators", the freebander and the cb'er, are not what ham radio operators generally are. Rather, they are people who have a varied interest within the realm of ham radio. They may be interested ONLY in local repeater operation, or ONLY in contests, or ONLY in dx'ing, or ONLY in public service, or ONLY in digital modes, or ONLY in visual (slow scan tv, etc.) modes, or of course, any mixture of or all of the above. The ham radio operator is expected to know at least a little of ALL aspects of ham radio, and one aspect of ham radio IS Morse code. The fact that Morse code knowledge is considered irrelevant by many as far as its not being useful for emergency communications (many disagree) and thus should be removed as a required knowledge is in itself irrelevant. If relevancy is the deciding factor, then there is no need to even have a ham radio test of ANY kind. If talking on the radio is the ONLY function that the no code proponents want, then the cb band and the "freeband" awaits them.

It has also been said that the Morse code requirement acts as a "filter" to keep out those who truly are not interested in making the investment to become members of the ham radio fraternity. I believe that to be a good thing. The no code proponents have suggested that the theory test be increased in it's difficulty in lieu of a Morse code requirement. Excuse me? Isn't this also a "filter"? Well certainly it is! As it should be!

If the Morse code requirement is dropped, as it has been by several other countries that have caved in to the "I don't want to work for my license...just give it to me" crowd, then the entire ham radio fraternity will disintegrate into the likes of the unregulated, illegal operations routinely found on the cb band and the so-called "freeband".

The ham radio license will then be dispensed from a tissue roll which looks remarkably like what one finds in a bathroom, and worth as much. After all, almost anyone can memorize the answers to the theory test, but knowledge of the Morse code requires a bit of effort, after which a profound sense of self accomplishment, and ACKNOWLEDGMENT BY THE FRATERNITY makes it all worthwhile.

KEEP ELEMENT 1 !!!!

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